

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 590

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NAVCOMMSTA HAROLD E HOLT

DOD

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR PFOR AS

SUBJECT: ADVERSE REACTION IN AUSTRALIA TO ECONOMIES AT NORTHWEST
CAPE

1. SEVERAL NATIONAL AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPERS IN PAST
FEW DAYS HAVE REPORTED CRITICISM BY TRADES AND LABOR
COUNCIL (TLC) IN PERTH OF RECENT DECISION TO ACHIEVE
ECONOMY IN OPERATION AT NORTHWEST CAPE STATION.
ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE FEW DAYS AGO AT STATION THAT
BECAUSE OF RECENT REVALUTATION OF CURRENCY THERE WAS
CONSEQUENT NEED TO REDUCE EXPENDITURES AT STATION
DURING CURRENT FISCAL YEAR BY US200,000 DOLLARS.
AT SAME TIME OFFER WAS MADE TO ALLOW EMPLOYEES AT
STATION VOLUNTARILY TO GO ON LEAVE WITHOUT PAY FOR PART OF THREE-
MONTH PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 1973. OFFER WAS ATTACKED
BY TLC, PERTH, WHICH APPEARED TO MISREPRESENT SITUATION
TO EFFECT THAT AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYEES WERE BEING DIS-
CRIMINATED AGAINST. NEWSPAPER COVERAGE SEEMED PUT
MATTER IN BETTER PERSPECTIVE, HOWEVER, AND INDICATED
SOME SYMPATHY FOR FINANCIAL PREDICAMENT.

2. AMCONSUL PERTH INFORMS THAT WEST AUSTRALIAN
NEWSPAPER MARCH 23 HOWEVER SUPPORTS TLC POSITION REGARDING
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CONDITIONS OF LABOR AT NORTHWEST CAPE. ACCORDING TO AMCONSUL THIS IS UNUSUAL STATEMENT FOR WEST AUSTRALIAN TO MAKE SINCE IN PAST THEY HAVE BEEN MORE THAN FAIR IN TREATMENT OF OCCASIONAL LABOR DIFFICULTIES REPORTED AT STATION.

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT NEW ANNOUNCEMENT ALSO WITH AIM OF SAVING MONEY IN CURRENT FISCAL YEAR WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT NORTHWEST CAPE ON MONDAY, MARCH 26. NEW ANNOUNCEMENT WILL STATE THAT SOME CATEGORIES OF AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYEES WILL NOT RECEIVE SCHEDULED STEP INCREASES IN SALARY AND THAT IN EFFECT THEY WILL BE FROZEN IN THEIR POSITIONS FROM NOW ON. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT APPEARS BOUND TO CREATE ANOTHER OCCASION FOR CRITICISM OF NORTHWEST CAPE BY TLC.

4. WHILE EMBASSY APPRECIATES DIFFICULTIES WHICH MAKE IT NECESSARY TO DECREASE EXPENDITURES AT NORTHWEST CAPE DURING CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, WE WANT TO BRING ATTENTION OF DEPARTMENT TO SITUATION WHICH COULD DEVELOP IF FURTHER MEASURES OF ECONOMY AFFECTING AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYEES ARE INTRODUCED. AMCONSUL PERTH REPORTS TELEPHONE CALL FROM WEST AUSTRALIAN PREMIER'S OFFICE MARCH 23 STATING PREMIER SENDING LETTER TO CONSUL ON SUBJECT. LETTER WILL SAY IN EFFECT PREMIER DOES NOT BELIEVE ECONOMY AT NORTHWEST STATION PRESENTS GOOD PICTURE OF USG IN LIGHT OF SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY INVOLVED (US\$200.000) AND HE DOES NOT FEEL ACTION INVOLVED IN REDUCING COSTS AT STATION ACCURATELY REFLECT US- AUSTRALIAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP.

5. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT SUCH ECONOMIES FOCUS ATTENTION UPON STATION AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME WHEN ALP GOVERNMENT IS IN PROCESS OF DEFENDING ITS POSITION ON FACILITIES WITH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT AND ALP PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS. WHILE WE UNWARE OF WHAT MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN TO RELIEVE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY IN WHICH NORTHWEST CAPE STATION FINDS ITSELF, WE CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT TO BRING TO DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION THE SITUATION WHICH APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING.

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